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File

Following is a transcript of the joint press conference held by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr Ohira, and the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, at the conclusion of the Australia/Japan Ministerial Committee talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, on 30 October 1973.

Mr Ohira

We have just completed the two day second meeting of the Australia/Japan Ministerial Committee.

This is the second meeting of this Committee, and is the first full-scale and highest level contact between our two countries since the Labor Party came to office in December last year.

You are all very familiar with the situation between Japan and Australia.

Our relations are such that for Japan, Australia is the second largest trading partner next only to the United States.

For Australia, Japan is her largest partner.

But it is not only that our relations have grown to a tremendous level quantitatively.

I want to emphasise that the relationship between our two countries has come to an enormous completeness, that of mutual dependence and complementarity.

This, however, does not mean that there are no problems on each of our sides.

There are problems on each of our sides.

But I believe on all of these issues or programs between us we have been able to conduct a very effective exchange of views without reservations, a dialogue that has been very

useful for our relationship.

On our part, the Japanese Ministers who have taken part are deeply satisfied with the accomplishment of this meeting.

Before I answer your specific questions, permit me to raise two matters that are worthy of particular note:

One - as you know, for some time the government of Japan had been asking the Australian government for the conclusion of a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation.

At the present meeting, Prime Minister Whitlam has told us that indeed Australia today is thinking about such a treaty, but not just a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation but in terms of a new treaty that would formalise the Japan/Australian relations on a much broader basis.

And, in the meeting between Prime Minister Whitlam and our Prime Minister, Mr Tanaka, Mr Tanaka expressed his wholehearted agreement to the proposal explained by Mr Whitlam.

So from now on between the two governments the officials will be racking their brains and will be working hard to come up with a draft of a treaty after thoroughly studying what kind of relationship there should be between our two countries, as we want to respond to the new age.

We hope to produce a draft that would fully answer the expectations placed upon us by the two Prime Ministers.

Salient point number two, energy and resources matters, which have of late brought about much tension in the world, is a matter of particular concern to Japan.

Japan has vital interest in a stable and continuous supply of energy and resources.

Australia, on the other hand, has the capacity to supply a large quantity of energy and other natural resources.

And, through supplying such resources, Australia seeks to increase the opportunities for employment of its citizens and thus to raise the standard of living and welfare of its people.

Therefore, the current energy and resources crisis has helped to bring to the fore the relationship of mutual dependence and complementarity between our two countries.

*Energy
Resources*

At the various levels our two governments will now begin close contact, and we are sincerely desirous that our already close relationship be further enhanced.

Finally, I would like to say that, as you have been able to observe, our guest, Prime Minister Whitlam, is a man of informal disposition and charming character.

I think that for both the Japanese and the Australians we are lucky that a person like Mr Whitlam has come to such close contact with Japan, and I take this opportunity to once again wholeheartedly welcome the delegation led by Mr Whitlam and appreciate the outcome of this conference.

Mr Whitlam:

Mr Ohira, I am very happy indeed, in the presence of our countries Ambassadors and press, to appear with you on this occasion.

This has been a very significant few days in the history of Australia and, I hope, in the history of Japan.

I join with you in expressing satisfaction at all the proceedings and the results of our meeting.

I was here, also as Prime Minister, to have discussion with Mr Tanaka.

I did so on the morning of my arrival last Friday.

I conclude with another on the morning of our departure tomorrow.

We had a very memorable and enjoyable dinner as his guests last night, and then yesterday and today, there was the second Ministerial Meeting.

I had previously, two and a half years ago, met you, sir, and Mr Sakurachi, Mr Nakasone, in Tokyo.

One year ago, you, and Mr Nakasone in Canberra.

My colleagues, Dr Cairns and Mr Crean, have already been here as Ministers and have met you.

Others of my ministerial colleagues have also been received by you.

In all these individual meetings that we have had, in government or in opposition, we have formed a very high degree of understanding with the government of Japan.

And now, collectively, as Australian Ministers, the largest number of Ministers ever to leave Australia to visit any other country or for any other purpose, we are happy indeed with the outcome of these discussions concerning the relations between our two countries.

You didn't mention, perhaps you were leaving it for me, that in many ways the highlight of our visit was at Mr and Mrs Tanaka's dinner last night when the Prime Minister of Japan suggested that the outcome of our deliberations, the treaty, might be known as the Treaty of Nara.

It was an appropriate title in Japan, commemorating the significance of Japan's ancient capital and cultural centre.

From Australia's point of view it is an appropriate name for the Nippon-Australia Relations Agreement.

In both countries the name will be honourable.

There has been a change in the attitude of the Australian government to relations with Japan.

Earlier there had been reluctance, a negative attitude, towards the proposal that Japan had made for some years for a broad-ranging treaty between our two countries.

My government was favourable to the idea.

It took a positive attitude towards it and from the first discussion that Mr Tanaka and I had, in your presence, Mr Ohira, last Friday morning, through all the intervening formal and informal meetings between us, the idea was greeted warmly.

So in the next few weeks and months we can expect our officials to be discussing this matter.

We each made suggestions as to the content of the agreement in our concluding plenary session this morning.

But this is a memorable occasion.

It is very satisfying to the Australian Delegation, and we are happy indeed that the Prime Minister of Japan, himself, should have given such a warm reception to the idea and should have suggested such a memorable name for it.

I must say, as I said to you privately, the whole of the Australian Delegation, the Ministers, the officials,

*Treaty of
Nara*

have been delighted with the arrangements which have been made in Tokyo and also in the provinces.

We have been most warmly received and we have a better understanding of all the issues which have been raised by Japan.

We believe Japan has a better understanding of the issues that Australia has raised.

But it is typical of the efficiency and courtesy of this country, the host country, that wherever we went, arrangements were so pleasant and effective, and we thank you, Mr Ohira, very much for the arrangements over which you presided, in the conference and outside it.

Question:

Mr Ohira, I would like to ask you whether you are concerned by Mr Whitlam's announcement at the meeting yesterday that the Australian government in future aims to prevent any further foreign ownership of Australian energy resources?

Mr Ohira:

In regard to important energy resources, the government of Australia desires to establish their own national ownership and control, a desire and aspiration that I can fully understand and appreciate.

However, this policy is a selective policy, as I understand it, and it does not apply to all minerals necessarily.

There is a reservation to that policy, namely, that the important surplus will be available for export.

This is an important point number one.

Another important point, point number two, is that Australia has assured us that this policy is not going to be implemented in any way to discriminate against any particular country.

All countries will be dealt with in fair fashion and I fully understand Australia's policy in so far as these reservations are concerned.

Our question is, how we can best be sure of a stable supply of the resources or minerals that we seek on such a basis.

Our job is to explore how we can be sure about that and I am sure we can find a way.

Question:

The Japanese business circles are very interested in your Pilbara project.

We understand that Australia seeks to develop this entire region industrially and the Japanese business circles wish to co-operate to that end.

The Japanese business interests seek to have equity participation in that project but I wonder what was the tenor of your discussions yesterday?

Could you tell us, Mr Whitlam, more specifically about Australian views with regard to the Japanese participation in this project, e.g. will Japanese equity participation be possible only through AIDC?

Mr Whitlam:

There was some discussion about the Pilbara and also about the AIDC.

It was not, however, a conclusive discussion because it will not be probably until the middle of 1974 that the Australian National Government and the Western Australian State Government will receive the pre-feasibility report.

At this stage, I think one can only generalise to this extent.

In so far as natural gas is involved in the development of the Pilbara, the objective will be to have wholly Australian ownership or control and the AIDC may be one of the implements for achieving that.

And, accordingly, any overseas participation in the natural gas would have to be through the AIDC.

On the other hand, iron ore is clearly a component in any development of the Pilbara, and this may be, at various degrees, either a complete steel works or say pelletisation.

In neither case would total Australian ownership be required, and while the AIDC might participate in the ownership of any iron ore developments in the Pilbara, it would not be the only component in such developments.

And, overseas interests would not have to go through the AIDC as regards the development of the processing of iron ore.

*Development
of
Pilbara*

Question:

Mr Whitlam, what is the most important achievement of your talks as far as Australia is concerned?

Mr Whitlam:

To hear, at first hand, to explain at first hand, the attitudes, the policies, the programs, of the two governments.

I suppose one can add also the response by the Australian government to the longstanding Japanese proposal for a broad bilateral treaty between the two countries.

Question:

Mr Whitlam has suggested that Asian and Pacific nations join in an organisation something like the organisation for the American States and the organisation of African States.

What is Japan's position in this proposal?

Mr Ohira:

What kind of machinery for regional co-operation should be created, if any, is a study for the government of Japan.

As you know, Asia is a highly complex region where interests of many big powers are intertwined.

If we are to produce a truly effective machinery for effective co-operation, we need to exert tremendous efforts to produce many ideas.

Speaking honestly, I don't think time is quite mature as yet, in my judgement, to produce any idea now, but I think it is a proposal that the government of Japan should continue to examine as a concept.

Question:

When do you see a target date, so to speak, by which you wish to complete discussion and preparation for this Nara Treaty?

For example, can you foresee the signing of such a treaty by the time of the third meeting of this Committee next year?

Mr Ohira:

There has been no specific agreement between the two countries as to by when they should produce such a treaty.

But we are to start our work immediately.

I don't think there is a need for us to wait until the occasion of the third meeting next year of this Ministerial Committee.

On the Japanese side we feel we must finish the work and coincide the treaty way before that.

Mr Whitlam:

I would agree with what Mr Ohira has said.

There will be two occasions in Australia next year when Japanese Ministers will be present.

One will be the third of the Ministerial Meetings and there will also be, of course, the occasion, we expect, of the visit by the Prime Minister of Japan to Australia.

It may well be that the treaty will be concluded before either event but it would be signed before or at either of those occasions.

Question:

What is the Japanese reaction to the Australian suggestion that although we don't want any overseas ownership of our energy resources, we still want their assistance both financially and technologically?

Do you think Japanese interests would be prepared to put in money and technology to ensure a continuation of supply of these energy resources?

Mr Ohira:

Japan does not seek any ownership or control of natural resources.

This is not only in Australia but with respect of any resources producing country.

What Japan seeks is to assure herself of a stable supply of natural resources.

Now, in trying to secure this supply, if the business interests concerned see that the economics favour such an arrangement in response to the request of the resources producing countries, then we should not spare any efforts in extending our co-operation financially or technically.